

## Commander's Guidance for Senior Leader Ethics Education

### **EXPLORATION TOPIC: DOUBLE STANDARDS AND TRUST**

The intent for this module, *Double Standards and Trust*, is to provide a platform of study and engagement with peers that will enhance understanding of double standards (or perceived double standards) of conduct and accountability for Senior Officers as related to other cohorts in the US Army. All Soldiers at some point have experienced these apparent differences in how Army processes and discipline are applied to different ranking leaders. These actual differences and perceptions of differences have the potential to negatively affect both the Army's esprit de corps and the Army's relationship with the American people.

In order to provide insight into the effects of these issues on the Army Profession, the module recommends an "evaluation of the impact of a double standard relating to consequences for unethical conduct and ethical shortcomings in all trust relationships."

The first area for investigation is the underlying cultural factors in Army environments that affect Trust in internal relationships between individuals or groups of individuals. How is trust developed / maintained? How does communication affect trust? What are effective communication strategies? What are the effects of breaking trust? Can broken trust be mended?

The second area for investigation is the examination of the application of Standards and Discipline across different ranks. What are Standards and Discipline? How are they applied to Soldiers? Are they applied differently to the various cohorts on the Army Profession? How does accountability for action/behavior change as a Soldier is placed in positions of greater authority?

The third area for investigation examines the existence and perception of a double standard relating to consequences for unethical conduct and ethical shortcomings. Does the US Army require different standards of conduct for each cohort? What are the actual differences in the treatment of senior leaders within the Army Culture? Do/Should Soldiers expect senior leaders to have different standards and to be treated differently? As seniors go up in rank, those of lower grade tend to readily assume that they are legitimately and ethically receiving appropriate treatment and being held to appropriate standards.

The fourth area for investigation examines the effects of the realities and perceptions of Double Standards on the Army Profession. What are the root causes of perceptions of double standards? What are the effects of outside organizations bring double standards to light? Is there a good old boy network? What are the risks and/or benefits of a double standard existing? What are the effects when Senior Leaders act outside of the Army's standards and Ethic? What are the effects on trust?

The fifth area examines the methods and requirements to report disciplinary actions to various audiences. How does the Army portray itself in Civil Military relations? What can we learn from other organizations, i.e. how Americans perceive highly paid CEOs of various industries? What are the effects of outside organizations (media) bringing double standards to light?

Together with the foundational modules, *The Army Profession as Our Unifying Purpose and Context* and *Investing in Character Development*, this module promotes learning in the higher categories of the cognitive and affective domains. Learning new material, applying the learning, and engaging in topic discussion is the suggested method.